

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Meetings Minutes

January 12, 2009

Members: Darian Unger, Alan Bowser, Kathy Stevens, Lucinda Lessley, Megan Moriarty, Victor Weissberg, Debbie Spielberg, Fran Rothstein, Deborah Linn, Evan Glass, Phil Olivetti Marilyn Seitz and Mark Woodard, Tiffany Graham-Golden, Mitch Warren and Mary Pat Spon

Members Absence: Cassandra Ford

Guest: Bob Colvin, Karen Roper, Jonathan Elkind, Jennifer Nettles, Jean Cavanaugh, Christine Arnold-Lourie, Jonathan Jay and Adam Daniel and Jason Tomassini

Call to Order and Introduction: Darian Unger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. members and attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board approved the December 2008 minutes.

Announcement

Kathy Steven announced the 3rd Annual Silver Spring Action event at Discovery Communications, Inc., on January 13.

Community Comments:

- Bob Colvin distributed the ESSCA newsletter and asked about the metal grates around the tree on Fenton Street and the one on Thayer by the Safeway which is very dangerous.

Gary Stith responded that DHCA is looking at the trees to put additional grates around them and are checking to see if they have funding.

- John Elkind commented that he had an issue of concern in the draft purple line letter and proposed changes to the paragraph related to tunneling under Wayne Avenue and did not object to further study of that because it would be productive in order to set aside some of the misgivings that have existed in the community. I am asking the Board to consider a slight softening of the language. Instead of saying that tunneling can offer significant opportunities that it be turned into “could” and some of the language be changed to “if it can”.
- Jonathan Jay stated Seven Oaks Citizens and Park Hills Associations are two Associations that represent citizens on Wayne Avenue and nearby neighborhoods. Both Associations have been clear in indicating that they are not comfortable with street level on Wayne Avenue. 80% of the households on Wayne have signed a petition and sent it to MTA opposing street level and advocating tunneling. The argument for not doing tunneling is that it would not be cost effective but has sense been determined that it is cost effective, increases ridership, improves travel time and can be built and combined with medium investment LRT for just less than \$1.4 million dollars which is nearly a quarter of a million dollars less than the high investment LRT alternative. The draft letter written is not strong enough in supporting tunneling.

- Tina Slater stated there were six options to vote for and the option that guarded the most vote was an at-grade alignment of the medium LRT as proposed in the DEIS. It has been portrayed as more people voted against at-grade than for it and this is true if you add up the other five options. Tunneling would preclude having a stop in the CBD because there won't be underground tunnels and the train could slow down car traffic.
- Park Hills has taken two votes on the purple line. The first vote they strongly opposed at-grade alignment on Wayne Avenue. The second vote looks as though it dilutes the opposition to the at-grade alignment. The numbers speak very clearly that there was not very much support and in fact the majority overwhelmingly voted against an at-grade alignment. The draft letter written by the Board addresses many of the neighborhood concerns around Wayne Avenue. I would like the letter to be stronger in supporting the idea of tunneling given the fact that the two Associations most impacted have deep concerns about the impact of an at-grade alignment.
- Karen Roper stated the big issue on this is the DEIS was inadequate and the process of analyzing community impact. If the surface and underground can be done correctly either place then in both places or don't put it. There will be impacts wherever it goes and if you name some of them than you need to name the other half of them.
- Adam Daniel stated he did not think the community should further urge the MTA study or consider tunneling beyond what is embodied in the DEIS and specifically in the medium investment option. That being an option where there is a station at the new Silver Spring Library and the train going down the length of Wayne eastward.
- Jean Cavanaugh stated she supports and is reinforcing all that Jonathan Jay stated. Our Association took a vote in February 2008 that clearly shows a majority of our community is opposed to an at-grade purple line. I appreciate the Board including in the letter a further study of that option. Montgomery County deserves the best transit system money can buy.

Purple Line Draft Letter Discussion

Darian Unger stated meetings have been held with civic associations, community groups and MTA for years on a Committee and Board level. Board members were asked for the three most important ideas to include in the purple line letter and discussion was held at the last meeting so we could see if there were common areas of agreement and/or common areas of concerns. Six members on the Board got together and drafted the letter for full Board discussion and approval. *(Thanks to Debbie, Evan, Marilyn, Mark, Lucinda, and Fran, for working constructively to draft the letter).*

Phil Olivetti moved the adoption of the letter and it was seconded by Kathy Stevens.

Discussion

- The paragraph on tunneling was the most contentious part as everyone can understand. The letter strongly supports light rail, the purple line and addresses concerns of the

community that felt DEIS did not adequately consider. We wanted to make sure the study was done but did not want to push so hard as to force a tunnel or that we wanted a tunnel being built thus rendering the project not cost effective.

- You can be a strong supporter of the light rail and purple line and not weaken the effort if you offer ways to improve it and address community concerns. There are false ideas that either you advocate something that is slightly different from what MTA has proposed or you support the purple line and don't think they are mutually exclusive. We can improve on it and no one in this meeting believes MTA has all the answers. It is very clear things can be done better and done in the context of saying we support the purple line and there are many issues that can still be addressed while you still have a purple line that is cost effective and actually moves more people. There will be portals in Silver Spring and those concerned should know that they will be on Mansfield and Long Branch. A tunnel does not necessarily preclude the stop at the library and it could still be cost effective depending on what is developed there and how you do entrances.
- The MTA report is seriously deficient in its analysis for the community. There was no tunneling analysis in the report and the Transportation Planning Staff had to ask MTA to come back with some initial estimates of what cost would be. Tunneling under downtown Silver Spring and along Wayne Avenue to Mansfield is cost effective and should have been presented in the Purple Line Alternative Analysis so neighbors could come to conclusion and make decisions about the alignment they wanted and it was not provided. MTA did not look seriously at the Silver Spring/Thayer analysis and if it is going to be a real alternatives analysis it seems they should have put all their efforts into Silver Spring/Thayer and Wayne, tunneling at-grade alignment. Park Hills is disappointed that MTA did not talk to the people at the Silver Spring Elementary School and Silver Spring International Middle School for it was important because there are at least 1400 children that attend school there everyday and should have been part of their analysis and it was omitted. As a Board and community we deserve better so when people come to us in the future and discuss community engagement and want to touch the Civic and tenants Associations we receive what we bargain for and deserve. MTA should have done more for the community to have confidence in their analysis.
- There are concerns about how projects are reviewed. One of the aspects decision makers look at is the extent to which you are being very nimby about the entire thing. There is a personal interest in maintaining some integrity for Sligo Creek Park and the Capital Crescent Trail and don't think we would lose anything by revising the last sentence to read, we hope that environmental and other impacts on community and other resources such as Sligo Creek Park and the Capital Crescent Trail will be minimized. As it builds an alliance with a community we are going to need as this connective route goes through both of us. It seems clear it will run at-grade on the trail and minimizing the negative impacts would be making every possible effort to retain some of the tree cover because the plan seems to be to level all those old trees.

Motion: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board unanimously accepted the proposed friendly amendments to the draft purple line letter. They unanimously and unequivocally support the construction of the Purple Line and agreed that the finalized letter sent to Ms. Diane Ratcliff MTA Director of Planning, County Executive Leggett, Phil Andrews, President, County Council and Royce Hanson, Chairman, Planning. *(See informational section of the packet for final letters, dated January 13, 2009).*

Chairs Report

Darian Unger reported that:

- The budget meeting with the County Executive is on February 3, Kathy Stevens and I will attend.
- Now that the general library plan has been decided we will discuss at our next meeting whether or not there should be a pedestrian bridge from the Wayne Avenue Garage across Wayne Avenue to the new library and is a controversial issue clearly from what board members have stated. I would like to invite committees to look at this issue within the next month if you find it appropriate.
- Thanks to Gary Stith for talking with the Planning Board to extend the deadline so our input could be fed in on the Purple Line tomorrow.

Director Report

Gary Stith reported that:

- January 15, at 7:00 p.m. the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board is hosting at the Long Branch Community Center a Budget Forum and the County Executive is scheduled to be there.
- January 19, office closed for Martin Luther King Holiday.
- February 5, Silver Spring Library, 8901 Colesville at 7:00 a public meeting is being held. Topic of discussion: County Council asked that the Department of Transportation evaluate the mid-block pedestrian crossing alternatives at the new Silver Spring Library connecting the new library to the Wayne Avenue Garage. We will present the evaluation to the HHS Committee on February 12.
- Farmer's Market sales this season are up 50% and they contribute this to their move to the block between Georgia Avenue and Fenton Street. Thanks to Downtown Silver Spring for letting the Farmer's market use that area. They are looking to bring in more vendors next year, open earlier in the season and end later. They are considering in 2010 making it the market year round like they have in Dupont Circle.
- There are two water main projects that are 340 day contract. They just started working on the replacement of two water mains on Fenton Street and the other on Georgia Avenue. I am not aware of any replacement on Piney Branch but I will check.
- Thanks to Marilyn, Phil, Victor, Alan and Evan for volunteering on the SSCAB nominating Committee and conducting interviews on Saturday, January 10. They were

careful in looking at diversity of membership on the Board and making their recommendations to the County Executive. Thanks to Debbie Spielberg for serving on the Board for many years and we appreciate her time and participation.

- Our office worked with Downtown Silver Spring, Buy Local Silver Spring, Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce and Silver Spring Penguin to stuff these bags that are in front of you for the Inauguration and we distributed them to the hotels. We had 18 businesses participate with coupons and special promotions.
- The Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites opened across the street from the Hilton on Colesville.

Q&A

- Deborah Linn asked Gary Stith about trees, sidewalks and telephone poles marked at Piney Branch and Sligo Creek Parkway heading north toward Manchester and going south there are markings on the sidewalks randomly down Piney Branch for a few blocks. PEPCO, Park Services denies it's there but somebody has marked all of this stuff and we would like to know why?
- Gary Stith responded he was not aware of the issue but would follow-up.
- Alan Bowser stated that Fenton Street was going to be repaved in 2008 so does the water main project mean the repavement will not take place.
- Gary Stith responded the reason the repaving was not done in 2008 is WSSC notified us that they were going to put a water main replacement down Fenton Street. We decided it did not make sense to repave the street and have them tear it back up. After the water main project is completed the County DOT will schedule the repavement.

CED Committee:

Phil Olivetti reported that:

- The last Committee Report is located on page 12 in the packet. Avi Halpert discussed United Therapeutic building on Cameron and Second and it will open November 2009.
- Officer Joy Patel gave an update on security in Silver Spring area. Several officers including Officer Patel have been certified in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Designs (CPTED) which will enhance natural, organizational and mechanical surveillance.
- Update on Silver Spring Library with major focus on the potential mid-block crossing.
- The initial report sent out by e-mail, had a incorrection in it about Councilmember Ervin's comments and the report has been revised. Gary Stith clarified that she has not made a decision about supporting the crossing but requested that a mid-block crossing study be done and this is part of the official record.

Next CED Committee meeting is Wednesday, January 21 and one item for further discussion will be the mid-block crossing, pedestrian bridge between the proposed library and Wayne Avenue garage.

Gary Stith asked that the first sentence in the CED report under the **Silver Spring Library** be deleted because there is no Mandatory Referral hearing on January 14.

Neighborhoods and Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Joint Committee meeting

Megan Majority reported that:

- We had the last joint Committee meeting with Neighborhoods and Transportation and Pedestrian Safety and Jeff Dunckel, Department of Transportation and Councilmember Floreen attended. We had discussion on sidewalks, pedestrian safety and trying to troubleshoot when issues come up. Councilmember Floreen, talked about the FY2010 budget process for the County and encouraged everyone to send their comments in to the County Executive as soon as possible.
- PREZCO is working on the Crime Prevention Summit and the next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

Next Neighborhoods Committee meeting is January 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the Silver Spring Regional Center.

Darian Unger announced that the Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, January 28, 7:30 p.m. at the Silver Spring Regional Center. Agenda items are pedestrian crossing for the library, Silver Spring bike trails and hopefully discussion on Zip/Flex car spaces in downtown Silver Spring

Outreach Committee

Kathy Stevens reported the group had a couple of meetings and is working on scheduling the next. We are working on outreach for recruitment of new Board members, communication for the community, website redesign issues and more community participation at our meetings.

New Business

FY10 Budget Priorities

Gary Stith distributed OMB's presentation that they are presenting at the Budget Forum on January 15, 7:00 p.m. at Long Branch Community Center.

Darian Unger stated this is a difficult budget year and there will be the community budget forum and this will be our chance to listen and hear what people have to say because we are meeting with the County Executive separately. Last year we hit upon the following issues:

Town Center, after care programs for youth in Broad Acres Elementary School Community ambulance fees, bike trails, police overtime for major events in Silver Spring and community policing, support for CSAFE, hybrid buses in Silver Spring and lobbied for pedestrian safety

measures as part of the interim transit center during the construction and for VanGo time extensions and these are the things we advocated on in terms of the budget last year.

Gary Stith suggested to the Board that it would be helpful to convey to the County Executive what this group hopes he does not cut because frankly everything is being cut. Police Department, HHS and Fire and Rescue have been asked not to cut as much but all the other Department's are being asked to cut a significant amount.

Discussion:

- Megan Moriarty stated that she hoped Board members would attend the forum and wished that the Board had been consulted about the date since they are technically hosting it and this is a great opportunity for gathering information. Emergency Services for HHS, rental assistance and utility needs to be top priorities. HHS has a plan to roll-out sort of an intensive emergency service in certain zip codes in Silver Spring. We need to emphasize that the need is great in Silver Spring especially for those emergency services and that HHS needs more money for staff and for people being evicted.
- Phil Olivetti stated that they should not cut the Urban District budget. We have made too much progress with them to cutback on hours, maintenance and services they provide Silver Spring.
- Debbie Spielberg stated Megan Moriarty made good points but the cuts should not be out of portion because last year they were cutting all of the bike trail maintenance and it was only \$100,000 dollars and they were not cutting in a portional way for roads. They eliminated the bike maintenance for the entire County and did not do anything comparable with roads.
- Alan Bowser stated public safety is important because as the econmy gets worse we see rather dramatic increases of crime in Silver Spring and this is an area that should not see a significant cuts. We need more police and resources.
- Fran Rothstein stated that scheduled infrastructure maintenance not be cut. Deferring things like the water main replacement and other maintenance has a long term ballon cost and not doing it will mean we end up with an emergency. The next issue is in response to what Megan stated and I would like the cuts evaluated from the perspective of penny wise, pound foolish and the best example is eviction because studies have shown if you keep someone in their home with a short term grant or loan the cost to the public sector is less.
- Phil Olivetti stated parking rates were increased last year but why not ask for parking rates to be increased in Silver Spring because this is a source of income.

- Evan Glass stated he went to testify last year regarding the parking increases because most of us that live in South Silver Spring park on the street and having to pay meters at 9:00 p.m. including Saturday was unbearable.
- Marilyn Seitz stated she would rather see them increase the amount and decrease the amount of tickets.

Gary Stith responded that they changed the rates last year but not the hours. The year before they did try to change the hours and got a real backlash.

- Debbie Spielberg stated that she did not know whether maintenance went all together for, bike trails, Ride-on, roads but she had read Ride-On was going to take some cuts and at a time when we are trying to get people out of their cars. Bike trails and Ride-On should not take a much greater portion hit than any sort of road projects. I do not support increasing the hours of VanGo this year.
- Vic Weissberg stated he would emphasize what the Board really wants protected.
- Phil Olivetti asked if any of the proposed cuts will impact the operation of the new Civic Building?
- Gary Stith responded that is new money to the budget. It has not been in the operating budget but I put together a budget request for the Civic Building and don't know how much they will give.
- Phil Olivetti stated to us having the operation of the Civic Building fully funded is extremely important to the community.
- Debbie Spielberg stated funding is not in the budget and it is better to make the Town Center as effective as possible to get some operating monies on board for planning.
- Alan Bowser stated he liked the point submission in last years budget that leads off Silver Spring Town Center as a programming vehicle for the community.
- Gary Stith stated the Civic Building is not scheduled to open until March 2010. I have one quarter of FY10 that needs funds. I asked for funds to be put in the budget to hire people before March so they can start planning for the opening.
- Alan Bowser stated the Board should argue that the cuts for Silver Spring and East County should be proportionally less than other parts of the County.
- Megan Morarity agreed public safety is important and should not be cut but to supplement youth programming funds should be better and preferred an increase in their funding and no cuts. With jobs being lost the County needs to focus on its workforce development in Montgomery Works programs to keep those relevant for jobs people are looking for and
- Deborah Linn stated that the Board really needs to focus. Clearly Public Safety and health issues need to have the least cuts in any environment. What does the County

really fund? I am not sure it is Silver Spring other than being more careful about giving away land but there is no development currently so if they want development they will make stupid deals and really we don't want education cut.

- Alan Bowser stated we are under funded on pre capita basis and don't want any cuts but more money for public safety, youth development programs, Health and Human Services and community center maintenance.
- Kathy Stevens stated we need to collect any additional information from people on Thursday and put it into a prioritized document.
- Mitch Warren asked if a list could be circulate via e-mail and that each member vote on the top three to see what come out on top.
- Darian Unger stated that he would do that but everything said is public.

Alan Bowser stated he is working with Tony Hausner and other committee members on the Crime Prevention Summit. We are trying to get as many different parts of the community involved as possible. If you have suggestion about people interested in being on the Steering Committee please forward their names to Tony Hausner, Megan Morarity or me. One issue we are dealing with is whether or not the crime in Silver Spring which I argue has become very dramatic over the last 6 to 9 months is home grown or coming from outside the community PG, DC and Baltimore because depending on the origin of the crimes there are different solutions on how to deal with it.

Darian Unger announced the Recreation Advisory Board that dealt with Silver Spring no longer exists and was cut last year. Technically no one is unrepresented but there is a less of the Silver Spring voice to the representation and something we should be aware of what happens to this Board

Gary Stith commented that the Recreation Department was divided up into five regions that were equal to the five Regional Centers and had five Recreational Managers, one for each area and one left. They saw this as an opportunity to reorganize and redistribute the County into four region. Long Branch went with East County and Coffield Center went with Bethesda/Chevy Chase Region.

9:00 p.m. Meeting adjourned

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